



Youthfever launches an informative booklet about “Dande”

On Monday evening, a number of the individuals considered the icons of Aruban culture and traditional music gathered in the open air patio of the Cas di Cultura to be honored, and to receive the first printing of what is hoped will be an annual publication “Nos Dande, Nos Cultura.”

The word dande (or dandee) is derived from the original Papiamentu word "dandara", which means "parandea: (or to revel; carouse; to have a good time). The celebration of dande began around 1880, after King William III declared the slaves "free men".

Dande performers usually travel from house to house on New Year’s Eve, serenading each house hold, and incorporating information about the individuals of the household into the verses, often with humorous results. Many believe that they will have bad luck in the coming year if the Dande musicians do not grace their home, and after their performance, they usually pass a hat around.

During the launch, beautifully framed renderings of the newly designed Dande logo by artist Michael Douglas were presented to members of the community, including Senora Bernadina Growell, the “Mother of Aruban Music and Culture,” Harry Croes, the President of the Dande Festival Commission and the President of Parliament, Mervyn Ras.

The book was introduced in a most unique manner, carried in by the “Padron and Padrino” of the publications, Malo Marine and “Titi” two individuals very well known in the traditional Aruban performing arts. They paraded around the patio with the book in a straw hat just like those worn by Dande performers, and each member of the audience made a contribution to the cause. Afterwards, Vincenzo Ras, a noted Dande performer prior to taking the stage, was awarded the contributions. He lead the gathering in a rendition of a classic Dande, with most of the audience joining in on the chorus of “Ai Nobe.”

The book is an attractive publication in both Papiamentu and English authored by Melvin Boekhoudt and containing an address by both Harry Croes, and the Minister of Culture, the Honorable Ramon Lee. A photo of famed Dande performer Leon Ras adorns the cover, and the book features his biography. There is also a complete history of the traditions of Dande, and an analysis of the music’s development including Tambu style music, punctuated by some very interesting historical photographs.

The book is being distributed at no cost and can be found at a number of outlets, including the Dande Festival coming up on December 29th at the Club Caiquetio in Paradara. There are nineteen Dande groups and sixty singers that will be competing from 8:00 until who knows when, but it is not unheard of to see the awards ceremony and the sunrise at the same time.

There is a strong movement to revitalize the tradition of Dande and all aspects of the Aruban culture, as Senora Bernadina Growell is quoted in the book as saying, “Love your culture, appreciate your tradition and value your folklore. The culture of our island is our wealth and greatness of our country, Aruba.”